



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY OFFICE MOBILE

SAFETY ALERT

CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE

The Coast Guard is currently investigating two deaths aboard a fishing vessel in Bayou la Batre, Alabama. Preliminary findings have identified that the victims were exposed to deadly levels of carbon monoxide (CO). Although the investigation is not complete, the Marine Safety Office in Mobile and the Eighth Coast Guard District believe it is imperative to alert the maritime public of what we have already learned.

Preliminary findings indicate the carbon monoxide came from a portable generator located in the forward part of the engine room, which was used to power the air conditioning unit and main deck lighting for the vessel. Exhaust gases from the generator vented directly into the engine room. Initial inspection of the vessel revealed the following: improper ventilation in the engine room, exhaust leaks from the main engine exhaust manifold, structural corrosion of the main deck, and open wiring trunks between the engine room and the cabin/wheelhouse. Inadequate ventilation in the engine room in conjunction with the openings between decks, allowed the exhaust from the portable generator to easily travel into the cabin area. The victims had ceased fishing, secured the main engine, and laid down to rest for the night. Due to the extreme heat and humidity, the doors to the cabin/wheelhouse were closed and the generator was started to power the portable air conditioning unit. The exhaust from the portable generator quickly filled the engine room with deadly levels of carbon monoxide, which in turn traveled through the deck openings into the cabin area. Unaware of the dangers, the victims went to sleep.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas, which is produced as a by-product of combustible diesel and gasoline engines. This toxic gas can accumulate quickly, especially in confined spaces, and has deadly effects on those exposed to it. Proper ventilation of exhaust is vital in maintaining a safe atmosphere onboard any vessel.

MARINERS ARE URGED TO ENSURE THAT ALL DIESEL AND GASOLINE ENGINES ONBOARD ARE PROPERLY VENTED. BE VIGILANT TO THIS ISSUE....YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.



Marine Safety Office Mobile

Released June 27, 2003